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CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR WOMEN--A GROWING CHALLENGE.

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COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE CHALLENGED TO EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR MATURE WOMEN. NEARLY 29 MILLION WOMEN ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE, MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY AS IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE WORLD WAR II. IN 1966, THEY REPRESENTED 37 PERCENT OF ALL WORKERS IN PROFESSIONAL, TECHNICAL, AND KINDRED OCCUPATIONS COMPARED WITH 45 PERCENT IN 1940. THIS UNDERUTILIZATION OF THE SKILLS OF WOMEN IS A SERIOUS WASTE. IT IS THE MATURE, EDUCATED WOMAN WHO UNDERUTILIZES HER POTENTIAL BY RETURNING TO THE LABOR FORCE IN JOBS INCONSISTENT WITH HER CAPACITIES AND SOCIETY'S NEEDS. SHE NEEDS BOTH CONTINUING AND REFRESHER EDUCATION. OFTEN STANDARD COLLEGE COURSES PRESENT DIFFICULTY -- THEY ARE ORIENTED TO TEENAGERS IN BOTH CONTENT AND PACE, THEY DO NOT UPDATE INFORMATION IN THE FIELDS OF INTEREST, THE HOURS ARE INCONVENIENT AND COUNSELORS ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS OF MATURE WOMEN OR FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO HELP THEM. MANY COLLEGES ARE RESPONDING TO THESE SPECIAL NEEDS OF WOMEN BY DEVELOPING PROGRAMS INCORPORATING LIMITED COURSE LOADS IN DEGREE OR NONDEGREE PROGRAMS, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING OF COURSES AT CONVENIENT HOURS, LIBERAL PROVISION FOR TRANSFER OF CREDITS, COUNSELING, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, CHILD CARE SERVICES, AND JOB PLACEMENT OR REFERRAL SERVICES. SPECIAL PROGRAMS OFFERED BY SEVERAL COLLEGES ARE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED. THIS TALK WAS GIVEN BEFORE THE 22ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, MARCH 7, 1967. (PS)

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CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

--A GROWING CHALLENGE--

Remarks by

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John Gardner, in the opening paragraphs of his speech last year from which stems the theme of this conference: "Leadership and Change in Higher Education," referred to the remaining barriers which still limit the access of all too many of our Nation's women to leadership roles in our society. It is particularly appropriate that a session of this conference be devoted to a discussion of the challenge to our colleges and universities to expand opportunities open to mature women for continuing education. For such opportunities designed to meet the special needs of adult women have immense significance for the fuller utilization of the abilities of women and for the removal of the barriers to leadership to which John Gardner referred.

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There can be no doubt about it. We are wasting the potential abilities of a very large number of our women--abilities now more than ever needed if we are to fulfill the great purposes of our society.

It is true that more women are in gainful employment than ever before. Nearly 29 million women are in the labor force--more than twice as many

as in the years immediately before World War II. Nearly half of all women aged 18-64 were workers last year. Yet as a group they remain highly concentrated in the lesser skilled occupations and this concentration has intensified in recent years. This is evidenced by many current trends.

Women constitute a diminished proportion of those in professional, technical, and kindred occupations. In 1966 they represented 37 percent of all workers in these positions compared with 45 percent in 1940. An 18-percent decline in these leadership roles in so brief a time span should be a cause for concern. The proportion of women in the relatively less advantaged fields has increased rapidly during this same period. In the service trades, excluding private household employment, their prcportion rose from 40 percent in 1940 to 55 percent last year; and in clerical occupations from 53 percent in 1940 to 72 percent in 1966. Nearly a fifth of our women with 4 years of college education are employed in these relatively less demanding fields.

The increasing concentration of women in lesser skilled jobs is reflected in the widening gap between the median earnings of men and women. In 1965 the median wage or salary income of women who worked year-round and fulltime was only 60 percent that of men so employed; in 1955, it had been 64 percent. This does not reflect inequality of pay for equal work which, thanks to new legislation and changing employer attitudes, is now a diminishing problem. Rather does it tell us something about the relative location of women in the occupational structure. We must also be aware that very few women hold highly responsible leadership positions. This is indicated by the fact that in 1965 only 4 percent received wage or salary incomes of $7,000 or more; less than 1 percent of $10,000 or more.

Much else beside might be cited as evidence of wastage of women's skills. We have an acute shortage of teachers in our colleges and universities, yet in 1964 women constituted only 22 percent of the faculty and other professional staffs of our institutions of higher learning. The proportion was considerably higher in 1940 (28 percent), in 1930 (27 percent), and even in 1920 (26 percent). It is only a little higher now than it was in 1910, yet the proportion of all degrees granted which were earned by women had risen 70 percent during these 54 years.

Less than 1 percent of our engineers are women, only 3 percent of our lawyers, 6 percent of our physicians, and 8 percent of our scientists. They play a negligible part in managerial fields. The relative role of our women in these professional, technical, and kindred fields suffers sadly by international comparison.

It is not surprising that President Johnson recently described this underutilization of the skills of our women as "the most tragic and most senseless waste of this century."

Many factors are involved. Primary among them are ones which pose a special challenge to our schools of higher learning.

Before World War II the great majority of women in the labor force were relatively young women; about three-fifths of them were under the age of 35. From the age of 25 onward the likelihood of a woman's being in the labor force diminished rapidly with each succeeding year. There was only one chance in four that a woman aged 45-54 would be in the labor force.

We are all aware of what has happened since to transform the relation of the mature woman to the job world. A two-phase lifetime working cycle

has emerged. The chance that a young woman will work when she is 18-34 years of age isn't very different from what it was in 1940. It's up a little--about 10 percent. It is after the age of 35 that we see a very marked difference.

During the period 1940-1966, the number of working women aged 35-44 years more than doubled; the number aged 45-54 more than tripled; and the number aged 55-64 increased more than fourfold. The woman today who is most likely to be a wage earner is 45-54 years old. Of women in this age group, 52 percent were in the labor force last year.

The more educated the woman, the more likely is she to be gainfully employed. Especially does the college graduate have a high degree of job commitment. Over 80 percent of them work from the time of graduation until they are 25 years old. During the peak years of childbearing and rearing, 25-44, the percentage in the labor force drops to 50 percent; but during the succeeding 20 years of their lives it rises to over 60 percent.

The woman with 5 or more years of higher education is even more job-oriented, particularly in her middle years. More than three-fourths of all such women are now gainfully employed between the ages of 35 and 64.

And the likelihood is that the educated woman will increasingly look for gainful employment once her children are in school and her home responsibilities have lightened.

A study made by the Women's Bureau of the activities of alumnae of the class of 1945, 15 years after graduation, revealed that one-third of the group were employed; 5 out of 6 of the remainder indicated an interest in future employment. We later surveyed women graduates of the class of 1957, 7 years after graduation. Over half were at work. Virtually all of those

in gainful employment expected to be part of the work force during their mature years. About two-thirds of those not working outside their homes in 1964 also expected to be part of the work force during their mature years.

While the mature educated woman is now very much part of the work force, it is she especially who is not bringing her full potential into play. All too many, because of obsolescence of skills due to discontinuity in employment, return to the labor force in jobs inconsistent with their own capacities and with society's rapidly growing needs for highly skilled personnel in a very wide range of fields.

It is not surprising that a rapidly growing number of women college graduates see in opportunities for continuing education the means to acquire needed refresher training. Many want to explore their aptitudes for different occupational outlets and develop new skills. Adequate preparation is the key to the realization of potential.

It is not the college graduate alone who has special needs. Women first-time college enrollees in the fall of 1960 numbered 300,943 at 4-year colleges and 86,106 at 2-year colleges. Only 197,346 women, however, earned a bachelor's degree during the school year 1963-64, a ratio of 51 percent to entrants 4 years earlier. (I should mention in passing that the ratio of men graduates to entrants 4 years earlier was 48 percent.) Many among the women who did not achieve the baccalaureate when young will want in their later years to return to complete their undergraduate studies as they see how restricted are employment opportunities unless they do so. More and more they appreciate that a bachelor's degree may be the indispensable steppingstone to better jobs; it is the prerequisite, of course, to further academic training which is increasingly now required.

Not all those who want to enroll in educational or training courses are motivated by job-connected reasons. Many want to pursue cultural interests. Others want specialized training and orientation for volunteer service, viewed no less seriously as an outlet for skill and leadership than gainful employment itself. Here, too, high-level skill is increasingly needed.

All too frequently the standard college or university course presents difficulties to the mature woman. Many of those participating in our survey are critical of courses with methodology or content oriented to teenagers. Such courses often may not interest women with considerable life experience. Other women report difficulty in locating classes that review or update basic information in their fields of interest; or report that the hours offered by local colleges are not convenient for them; many mothers want courses scheduled at times when they are not caring for their children. Some alumnae also express an interest in accelerated courses when they are preparing for employment.

The most frequent request of alumnae, we find in our studies, is for individual counseling by qualified persons. They seek highly competent advice with respect to educational and employment plans. College counselors who necessarily spend much of their time working with young people often do not realize the special problems associated with continued family responsibilities and reentry into the labor force at a mature age. Alumnae also feel that many of their counselors are often not sufficiently aware of existing services and facilities that can help solve their problems. We cannot stress too strongly how great is this sense of need for career guidance geared to new realities at this critical turning point in the life of a woman.

Fortunately many of our colleges and universities are responding rapidly to these special needs of women. The Women's Bureau just a few weeks ago published a bulletin entitled "Continuing Education Programs for Women." This contains a partial list of colleges and universities with continuing education programs or special educational services designed primarily for adult women. The programs and services of nearly 100 educational institutions are briefly described. A more comprehensive listing will follow in response to the demand we have encountered for a more inclusive directory.

Some of the principal features of these programs include: limited course load in degree or nondegree programs, flexible scheduling of classes at hours convenient for housewives, liberal provision for transfer of credits, educational and employment counseling, financial assistance for part-time study, child-care services, and job placement or referral services.

These programs are making an impressive contribution. They are meeting diversified needs. I can indicate but a very few examples.

We are all deeply indebted to the pioneering of the University of Minnesota, which in 1960 formally organized a facility specifically committed to making the resources of the University more efficiently and effectively useful to adult women. Now called the Minnesota Planning and Counseling Center for Women, it highlights individual counseling and information services for women at all levels of education. Women are referred to both educational and employment opportunities. The program encompasses scholarship aid, nursery facilities, and job placement services.

Sarah Lawrence College in New York initiated a program in 1962 especially for adult women who wish to resume an interrupted college

education on a part-time basis. The women are provided counseling assistance and refresher courses prior to admission as degree candidates. The enthusiastic response to this program stimulated the establishment of part-time arrangements for graduate study also. In cooperation with other universities, the college has arranged for part-time study programs leading to a master's degree in social work, library science, or early childhood and elementary education.

Comprehensive programs of continuing education for mature women are offered by the University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, and many others. Some are designed especially for adult women who wish to complete or start their undergraduate education.

General orientation workshops have been developed by various colleges and universities in response to demand from adult women interested in entering or reentering the work force. These courses typically provide guest lectures on careers, information about educational courses and volunteer work, counseling on both a group and an individual basis, and placement assistance. Among the schools offering this type of continuing education program are Barnard College in New York City, George Washington University in the District of Columbia, and the University of California at Los Angeles.

The Radcliffe College Institute, Cambridge, as many of you know, seeks highly qualified women, particularly those with doctorates, and provides generous financial assistance so they can combine a period of creative education with homemaking. Its expanded program also includes weekly seminars for adult women, a guidance laboratory, and a research program.

Men as well as women adults whose lives are not geared to regular classroom and credit-hour requirements are benefiting from many new types of degree programs which may permit short-term residence requirements; may stress

independent study; may grant credit for life experience; offer correspondence study, taped lectures, and programmed learning among other features.

This must be a time for educational innovation and experimentation responsive to a demand immense in scope and significance both for the individual and society. For the mature woman particularly, the availability of educational offerings geared to her special needs may well spell the difference between contribution at a high level and wasteful underutilization of talent.

We are now more than ever committed as a Nation to the realization of the human potential. Our colleges and universities, by expanding their continuing education programs for women, can help greatly augment the contribution of our women and their leadership roles.